

# STONE'S RIVER

WILSON J. VANCE

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# STONE'S RIVER

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The Turning-Point of the Civil War

By  
WILSON J. VANCE



New York  
The Neale Publishing Company  
1914

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# STONE'S RIVER

## PREFACE

While many authorities were consulted in the preparation of this work, particular acknowledgment is due John Formby's "The American Civil War," wherein was suggested the proposition that is here laid down and expanded; to Van Horne's "History of the Army of the Cumberland," which gives the campaigns of that organization in minute detail; to several of the papers and books of Charles Francis Adams,—documents that deal principally with the diplomacy of the Civil War, and to the published and spoken words of the author's father,—the late Wilson Vance,—orderly to the brigade commander whose charge against orders turned defeat into victory in the battle here described. The book grows out of a short article published in the Newark *Sunday Call*, December 29, 1912,—an article that attracted considerable attention, rather because of the novelty of the theory advanced than because of other merit.

It may be permissible to add that few persons, —comparatively,—conceive the bearing on the

outcome of the Civil War, of the campaigns and battles that took place beyond the Alleghanies. There is more than one pretentious history, which would lead a reader to suppose that all of the events of importance took place upon the Atlantic seaboard. It does not diminish in the least either the merit or the renown of the armies that measured their strength in that confined arena to suggest that the movements that resulted in the transfer of the control over hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory,—territory that teemed with the fruits of the earth,—was, taken in connection with the naval blockade, a very considerable factor in the wearing down and final collapse of the Southern Confederacy.

WILSON J. VANCE

NEWARK, N. J., JULY 14, 1914.

## INTRODUCTION

On the banks of a shallow winding stream, traversing the region known as Middle Tennessee, on the last day of December, 1862, and on the first and second days of January, 1863, a great battle was fought,—a battle that marked the turning point of the Civil War. Stone's River, as the North designated it, or Murfreesboro,—to give it the Southern name,—has hitherto not been estimated at its true importance. To the people of the two sections it seemed at the time but another Shiloh,—horrifying, saddening, and bitterly disappointing. Its significance, likewise, has escaped almost all historians and military critics. But now the perspective of half a century gives it its proper place in the panorama of the great conflict.

Gettysburg, indeed, may have been the wound mortal of the Confederacy. But Gettysburg was, in very truth, a counsel of desperation, undertaken when the South was bleeding from many a vein. When Lee turned the faces of his veterans toward the fruitful fields of Pennsylvania, a wall of steel and fire encompassed his whole country. War-worn Virginia cried out for relief from the march-

ings of armies, that her people might raise the crops that would save them from starvation. Grant had at last established his lines around the fortress that dominated the Mississippi, and only by such a diversion, was there hope that his death-grip would be shaken. The day after Pickett's shattered columns had drifted back to Seminary Ridge Vicksburg was surrendered, and the control of the mighty river passed to the forces of the North.

But it was at Stone's River that the South was at the very pinnacle of confidence and warlike power; and it was here that she was halted and beaten back,—never again to exhibit such strength and menace. It was here that the tide of the Confederacy passed its flood, henceforth to recede; here that its sun crossed the meridian and began its journey to the twilight and the dark. Southern valor was manifested in splendid lustre on many a field thereafter, but the capacity for sustained aggression was gone. After Stone's River, the Southern soldier fought to repel rather than to drive his foe.

Yet Stone's River was almost a tale of triumph for the Confederacy.

"God has granted us a happy New Year!" was the message flashed to Richmond at the close of the first day's fighting by General Braxton Bragg, Commander of the Army of the Tennessee. Two-thirds of the Army of the Cumberland had been

hurled out of line, and now lay clinging with desperation to the only road from which it could secure supplies, or by which it could retreat, and to lose which meant destruction. There was reason, therefore, in the Southern general's exultation, as he waited for the morrow to give him complete success. He could not know that the army upon which had been inflicted so terrific a blow was to gather new strength out of the very magnitude of its disaster and to return such a counterstroke as would give it the field and the victory. Neither could he see that his failure here meant failure for his cause; that because at Stone's River success had not crowned his efforts, his own magnificent army was to be pressed further and further from the territory it claimed as its own; that Fate had here entered the decree,—against which all appeals would fail,—for the preservation of the Federal Union and the death of the Confederate States of America.

WILSON J. VANCE.

## CHAPTER I

### NORTH AND SOUTH IN 1862

Confederate enterprise, energy, and expectation were at the zenith in 1862. No other year saw the South with so promising prospects, with plans of campaign so bold, with such resources, both latent and developed. Her armies were at their fullest strength, for the flower of her youth had not yet been destroyed in battle. Want and hunger had not yet begun to chill the hearts of her people. Her political machinery, under the direction of able leaders, had been skillfully adjusted to the needs of the new nation and was now working smoothly and effectually. There had, indeed, come a change of sentiment in the Southland. That boastful and flatulent spirit,—the spirit that contemptuously slurred the strength and courage of the foe and counted upon an easy victory,—was gone. In its place was a temper far more formidable. The South realized now that before it was a task of greatest magnitude, but her people rose to it in a spirit of splendid sacrifice and with high, stern resolution.

The early part of the year, indeed, brought a series of reverses, particularly in the West,—re-



verses that would have seemed fatal to a cause, less resolutely supported. In January was fought the battle of Mill Springs, where Thomas, in routing the Confederate forces, achieved the first considerable Union success of the war. In February came Grant's capture of Forts Henry and Donelson, which not only yielded thousands of prisoners but left Middle Tennessee open to the invaders. The same month witnessed the opening of operations in North Carolina by Burnside, which resulted in the capture of Roanoke Island and (in March) of New Berne. Pea Ridge, fought in March, dashed Confederate hopes of Missouri,—for a season,—and the capture of New Madrid proved another heavy loss to the South, in men, guns, and munitions. Early in April Fort Pulaski yielded to Gillmore, and McClellan's great army began its progress up the Peninsula, with Richmond as its announced goal. The siege-artillery of the Army of the Potomac was still thundering at Williamsburg, when, on May 6 and 7, was fought the bloody battle of Shiloh, in which the Confederates,—after a striking initial success,—were driven from the field by Grant and Buell, with the death of their loved commander, Albert Sidney Johnston, to make more bitter their defeat. The echoes of Shiloh's guns had scarcely ceased, before Island No. 10, with many prisoners and supplies, fell to Pope, and the crowning Confederate disaster came on May 28, when Farragut

received the surrender of New Orleans,—the commercial metropolis, the largest and wealthiest city, and the greatest seaport of the South.

But Confederate prestige, which had suffered sadly in these events, was speedily restored in fullest measure. While McClellan was toiling slowly up the Peninsula, Jackson was electrifying the whole South by his campaign in the Shenandoah Valley, where, with a small force, he neutralized armies aggregating 70,000 men, and terrorized the Federal capital. Kernstown, Front Royal, Winchester, Cross Keys, and Port Republic, are names that serve to recall some of the most brilliant exploits of the war.

His work in the valley accomplished, Jackson then slipped away in June to aid Lee in the battles around Richmond,—battles that were to culminate early in July in the retreat to Harrison's Landing and the reluctant and humiliating withdrawal from the Peninsula of the Army of the Potomac. While the withdrawal was still in progress, Lee fell upon the luckless Pope, and in the second Battle of Bull Run all but crushed his newly-constituted Army of Virginia. Then Lee gave the Northward road to his victorious legions, and early in September began the invasion of Maryland.

After the battle of Shiloh, the Confederate forces of the Middle West,—under Beauregard,—had retired to Corinth, Miss., which Halleck,

at the head of more than 100,000 men,—having gathered together Grant's army, Buell's and all the other forces under his command,—approached with ridiculous caution. After a somewhat farcical siege, in which Beauregard played successfully for time, Corinth was suddenly and expeditiously evacuated, and the Confederate Army reappeared in a strong position at Tupelo, when, Beauregard having fallen ill, Bragg assumed command.

Halleck now divided his forces again, Buell,—at the head of what was now known as the Army of the Cumberland,—being sent into Middle Tennessee to begin a campaign long urged by President Lincoln for the relief of the Unionists in the eastern part of that State, and Grant being left in Mississippi, with somewhat widely-separated detachments, which ultimately he was to concentrate in the campaign for Vicksburg. The taking of Memphis (June 6) had already given the Union forces a foothold on the great river and domination over Western Tennessee. Halleck was summoned to Washington in July, to take command of all the armies in the field.

The dispersion of the Union forces in his front did not pass unnoticed by Bragg, who soon conceived and put into execution one of the boldest plans of campaign of the war. Early in June he began the shifting of his Army of the Tennessee to Chattanooga, where, in conjunction with Kirby Smith,—commanding a Confederate Army in East

Tennessee,—he perfected his scheme of operation. The prelude of his campaign was exhibited in the form of extensive raids by Forrest's Cavalry and Morgan's, in which the Federal lines of communication were repeatedly cut, huge stores of supplies taken or destroyed, and several important posts captured. Early in August the heavy columns of Confederate infantry and artillery began pouring through the mountain passes into the coveted territory of Kentucky.

Bragg's invasion of Kentucky was thus practically simultaneous with Lee's invasion of Maryland; and the two movements caused the direst foreboding and dismay in the North. The war was coming very close to the people of that section when Confederate detachments appeared in the rear of Covington, in sight of Cincinnati, and when the chief Confederate Army crossed the Potomac into the Maryland that the Southern poets had already immortalized in song. Not the least of the objects of these two campaigns was the winning to the Confederate cause of the States invaded.

Nelson, with a small Union force, was badly beaten by Kirby Smith at Richmond, Ky., August 23, and Louisville experienced the agonies of a panic, for it was practically defenseless. Buell had been so mystified by Bragg's movements that he did not start in pursuit until September 7, and even then might not have reached Louisville in

time, had not the Confederate forces lost precious hours in taking Munfordville. But having reached that city, Buell held the key to the situation, and Bragg was forced to retire,—which he did slowly and carefully. At Perryville a portion of Buell's army and some of Bragg's troops met on October 8 in a fierce battle,—an engagement that will always be a source of mystery to students, in that neither side took advantage of obvious opportunities. Bragg, in this campaign, failed of a major object, which was to rouse Kentucky for the Confederacy, though he went through the form of inaugurating a Provisional Governor at the State capital, Frankfort; but he did return South with long trains of fine horses and beeves, with wagons richly laden with food and clothing, and with almost enough recruits to offset the human wastage of his army on march and in battle. Moreover, at the close of the campaign he was in the possession of some territory heretofore held by Federal forces,—territory that was not yielded up until almost a year later.

The disorganization in and near Washington,—consequent upon Pope's defeat,—gave Lee an advantage which he improved by celerity of movement; and he was well into Maryland before a Union army was got together to oppose him. The command of this army was entrusted to McClellan, who exercised his customary super-caution, one result of which was that Harper's Ferry, with

thousands of prisoners and great stores of military supplies, fell,—with scarce a struggle,—into Lee's hands. This very success might have been fatal to Lee,—for he had scattered his army to accomplish this and other objects,—but McClellan, though fully aware of the situation, moved too slowly, and the Southern general had time to concentrate on the banks of Antietam Creek. Here, on September 17, was fought one of the bloodiest battles of the war,—a battle in which the Confederate Army stood off a foe twice as strong in numbers, and at length retired at leisure, without further molestation. Like Bragg, Lee had failed to win the State that he had invaded, but though he had suffered tremendous losses, he had accomplished some important results.

The people of the North, it may be remarked without disparagement, were better informed as to the events of the war than were the people of the South. Their more thickly settled territory was abundantly supplied with telegraph lines and railways, and their numerous populous cities boasted many strong newspapers. Of these, not a few were hostile to the administration, which also had to contend with a well-organized opposing political party. To many persons in the North the campaigns of Lee and Bragg seemed conclusive proof that the Confederacy, after almost two years of fighting, was not only not weaker, but could at

will practically carry the war into Northern territory.

Lincoln, accepting the check at Antietam as a victory, had (September 22) issued his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, but the first effect of this was probably adverse, for the fall elections went almost uniformly against the President's party. The Nation's credit fell to a low ebb, and offerings of Government bonds found few takers, only \$25,000,000 worth being sold during the year. Gold mounted to high and higher premiums, and general business,—despite the artificial stimulus incident to the production of war materials,—was dishearteningly poor.

Buell, because of his failure to do more against Bragg, was relieved of the command of the Army of the Cumberland, which fell to Rosecrans, who had achieved success at Corinth, during the fall. McClellan, because of his failure to follow Lee after Antietam, was ordered to turn over the Command of the Army of the Potomac to Burnside. As the end of the year drew nigh, Rosecrans was established with his army at Nashville, and Bragg was at Murfreesboro, 30 miles south. The events of that season were well calculated to enthuse the Confederate and to depress the Federal force. On December 13 was fought the Battle of Fredericksburg, where the Army of the Potomac was repulsed, with frightful slaughter, by the Army of Northern Virginia, under Lee. A week later, the

immense depot of supplies at Holly Springs,—supplies that Grant had gathered to aid him in his campaign against Vicksburg,—was captured. On December 29, Sherman, in a preliminary movement of this campaign, was hurled back, stunned and bleeding, from an assault upon Chickasaw Bluffs.

Two days later was to open the pivotal battle in Middle Tennessee.



## CHAPTER II

### FOREIGN RELATIONS IN 1862

The outbreak of hostilities between the North and the South was greeted with obvious delight by the majority of public journals, and with thinly veiled satisfaction by many of the public officials of the more important nations of Europe. Russia, indeed, showed a substantial and potent friendship for the United States, and Italy,—where the movement for liberal institutions had already won important victories,—evinced a sympathy both general and genuine. But these were the exceptions. In Austria and the German States the hostile feeling for the American Republic had little effect at the time. The attitude of France and Great Britain was vastly more hurtful.

Napoleon III was then at the very height of his power, and his bizarre performances and dreams of conquest had dazzled the imagination of his countrymen to an extent that it is difficult to realize at this day. Nay, more,—he had cast such a spell over the minds of Her Britannic Majesty's ministers as to have led to a practical alliance upon certain important subjects. The French Emperor

saw in the disruption of the United States a vindication of his own usurpation and an opportunity to plant an Imperial Government under his own guidance in Mexico. In addition, the shortage of cotton, due to the blockade of Southern ports, was causing very serious distress in the textile districts of France; so there was perhaps one real reason for the Emperor to show some concern in trans-Atlantic affairs, and repeatedly to proffer his unfriendly "friendly offices." However that may be, his suggestion of mediation and intervention did not fall upon deaf ears across the Channel, though, with characteristic caution, the British Government deferred action until its opportunity had passed.

French ill-opinion could have been borne,—even if it had taken the form of countenancing contracts for Confederate ships-of-war and winking at aid and comfort given to the cruisers of that unrecognized power. But British unfriendliness took a form that, short of actual war, could scarcely have done more to harm and exasperate the government and people of the United States. The recognition of the belligerency of the Confederates,—which (candor compels the statement) had much in logic and reason to justify it, larity—was but the least of the offendings.

In plain defiance of international law, splendid vessels were built in British yards for the purpose however it may have savored of technical irregu-

of sweeping the commerce of the United States from the seas; Confederate rifles and cannon were readily procured from British dealers; Confederate loans were floated by British bankers, and oversubscribed by the British public; the sale of shares in British blockade-runners to Confederate ports was an easy matter, as it appealed not only to the cupidity but to the prejudice of the purchaser. All grades of publications,—from the newspapers to the stately reviews,—teemed with abuse of Americans,—abuse written in almost inconceivable ferocity and malice. The humorous organ, *Punch*, did not check its “scurrile jester” in the drawing of most offensive cartoons of the President of the United States; practically the whole of the aristocracy was hostile; in all Parliament but one voice was raised for the North, and that was the voice of John Bright.

While the rancor and venom were expended upon the North, and while that section suffered solely from the violations of international law, it must not be supposed that the British press, patricians, and politicians were actuated by any genuine motives of good will to the South. Their hope and prayer were for the disruption and destruction of the Republic, in which the nobility recognized their most powerful,—however passive,—enemy; and the trading classes thought they saw the ruin of their commercial rival. There was, however, one great element in England that was

stanchly on the side of the North throughout the whole conflict; and though it did not possess the franchise, this element was not without its influence. The working classes of the kingdom were able to penetrate the mists that blinded their superiors in station, and they saw from the beginning that, whatever the ostensible purpose, the actual result of Northern triumph would be the end of slavery. It is at once a pathetic and magnificent fact, that no amount of specious argument, such as was frequently addressed to him, that no reflection upon his own sufferings, could win the Lancashire cottonspinner,—starving, because of the shortage in the great staple of his industry,—from the cause of human freedom.

It is, perhaps, too much to say that the British Ministry had always inclined to a recognition of the Confederacy. But as the war progressed and its desperate and extensive character began to be revealed, the project of some action tending to this end was frequently discussed in Downing Street. The British premier at this time was Lord Palmerston, and next in rank to him in the Cabinet was Lord John Russell, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Practised and polished politicians both, they had been able to adjust their ambitions and predilections in this instance to mutual satisfaction. But a third member of the Ministry, the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave them both great concern. William Ewart Gladstone,—

whose genius was then being revealed in full proportion to the English public,—was too able, too popular, and, above all, too formidable to be left out of the Coalition Cabinet. But it is well established that he was regarded with personal dislike and with professional jealousy by his veteran colleagues. This feeling of animosity was to lead to a most singular consequence,—one that had a grave bearing on American affairs.

The stopping by a United States warship of the Royal Mail Steamer *Trent* in November, 1861, and the removal therefrom of the Confederate envoys, Mason and Slidell, brought the two countries to the brink of war. Only the prompt, complete, and skillful disavowal of the American Government served to avert hostilities, preparations for which had already begun on the part of Great Britain. The temper and disposition of Her Majesty's Ministry were plainly shown in the truculent tone of the demand framed by Russell,—a paper that was adopted by the Cabinet, though Gladstone suggested some modifications. However, it would have been sent as written, had not the Queen, acting on the advice of the Prince Consort, insisted upon a modification of some of the more offensive phrases. Had it not been for this kindly and sagacious interposition of Queen Victoria, the situation might have gone beyond the power of the Lincoln Government to control.

The smothering of the *Trent* incident in the

honey of diplomacy left the Ministry without an immediate and direct pretext for unfriendly action, but there remained a feeling of irritation and a tacit determination to do something when a proper opportunity should occur.

The Confederate successes in the summer of 1862 were convincing proofs to the British mind that the independence of the South was only a matter of time, and discussions of the subject were frequent at the Cabinet meetings. Those were anxious times for the American Minister, Charles Francis Adams, whose personal luggage was kept packed in anticipation of a sudden breach of diplomatic relations which would necessitate his departure from the Court of St. James.

Near the close of the summer, Gladstone wrote to his wife: "Lord Palmerston has come exactly to my mind about some early representations of a friendly kind to America, if we can get France and Russia to join." At about the same time he wrote to another correspondent: "My opinion is that it is vain, and wholly unsustained by precedent, to say that nothing shall be done until parties are desirous of it," and went on to repeat the former suggestion.

About two months later Palmerston wrote to Gladstone saying that he and Russell were agreed that an offer of mediation should be made by Britain, France, and Russia, and that the Ambassador at Paris was to be instructed to communicate

with the French Government on the subject. "Of course," he added, "no actual step would be taken without the sanction of the Cabinet."

Lord Russell had but a few days previously written a letter to Palmerston, which had been shown to Gladstone, in which he said: "I agree with you that the time is come for offering mediation to the United States government with a view to the recognition of the independence of the Confederates. I agree further that, in case of failure, we ought ourselves to recognize the Confederate States as an independent State."

With the words of these two letters singing in his mind and mingling with the mental harmonies he himself had conceived, Mr. Gladstone went to Newcastle to partake of a banquet prepared for him by party admirers, and to utter on October 7, 1862, in the course of a general speech, a comment upon American affairs that was to vex him to the end of his life. Said he:

"We know quite well that the people of the North have not yet drunk of the cup,—they are still trying to hold it far from their lips,—which, all the rest of the world see, they, nevertheless, must drink of. We may have our own opinions about slavery; we may be for or against the South; but there is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made,—what is more than either,—they have made a nation. We may anticipate with certainty the success of the Southern States, so far as their separation from the North is concerned."

It is difficult to exaggerate the profound sensation that this passage in Gladstone's speech made

in the United Kingdom, on the Continent, and in the United States. There was no escaping its significance. It meant that the British Government was on the point of recognizing the independence of the South, and such an act must have led to war between Great Britain and the United States. Aware of the sentiment that pervaded the Cabinet, Minister Adams had sought explicit instructions from the United States State Department, which instructions had come in unequivocal terms in a letter from Secretary Seward. Mr. Seward wrote:

"If contrary to our expectations, the British Government, either alone or in combination with any other Government, should acknowledge the insurgents, while you are remaining without further instructions from this Government concerning that event, you will immediately suspend the exercise of your functions. . . . I have now, in behalf of the United States, and by the authority of their Chief Executive Magistrate, performed an important duty. Its possible consequences have been weighed and its solemnity is therefore felt and freely acknowledged. This duty has brought us to meet and confront the danger of a war with Great Britain and other States allied with the insurgents who are in arms for the overthrow of the American Union. You will perceive that we have approached the contemplation of that crisis with the caution that great reluctance has inspired. But I trust that you will also have perceived that the crisis has not appalled us."

Mr. Adams must have perused this letter many times as he waited for the meeting of the British Ministry,—which he learned had been called for October 23,—to act upon the question of the Civil War in America. Indeed, he had felt a strong impulse to call for his passports immediately after



the Gladstone speech at Newcastle, but had concluded to wait a few days for formal action by the government to which he was accredited.

But now conditions and circumstances beyond the ken of diplomacy had conspired to put the inevitable moment indefinitely forward. Whether, as has been suggested, Gladstone, in his Newcastle speech, had intended to force his colleagues into a position the only outlet of which was recognition, or whether knowing their sentiments he had in mere exuberance let the cat out of the bag, he had committed a grave breach of official etiquette in thus speaking without express Cabinet sanction. It was a false move, upon which Palmerston and Russell seized with eagerness and,—it may be imagined,—private glee. Within a week Sir George Cornwall Lewis, a member of the Cabinet, made, at Palmerston's express direction, a public speech in which he adroitly gave the lie to Gladstone. The fateful Cabinet meeting of the 23rd was postponed, and a new proposal of Napoleon III that came at about this time,—a proposal looking to joint mediation or intervention,—was rejected, on the ground that the time was not yet ripe.

The British Ministry kept looking for the auspicious opportunity for several months thereafter. Many thought it had come in the middle of December, when the Fredericksburg disaster was described by the London *Times* correspondent

as "a memorable day to the historian of the Decline and Fall of the American Republic." But on the last day of the year was begun the battle that was to show the British public,—what was sometimes forgotten,—that there were armies outside of Virginia and territories beyond the Alleghanies. Out of the mists which surrounded Stone's River,—out of the uncertainty due to counter-claims of victory by the rival commanders,—arose this definite fact: The Northern Army had occupied the town that it set out to take, and the Southern Army had retired almost to the borders of Tennessee and could not dispute the claim of its enemy to the greater part of the area of that Commonwealth. Another postponement seemed necessary. By this time also the leaven of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which at first had been derided, was working in England; and, in their turn and time, Gettysburg and Vicksburg aided to produce a much-changed official atmosphere. The Foreign Minister who, against the law of the Kingdom, had let the *Alabama* and the *Florida* slip away to prey upon American commerce, was to strain that law a few months later to hold war-vessels that had been built for the South.

The danger to the Union from foreign sources had passed.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ARMIES AND THEIR LEADERS

The armies that were soon to measure strength in Middle Tennessee were not strangers. They had raced with each other to the banks of the Ohio in the previous fall, they had confronted each other,—at times,—in fractional strength upon a score of fields. It was the advance division of the Army of the Ohio, which had checked the Confederate onset on the first day at Shiloh, where Grant was all but overwhelmed, and that command, in full strength, had done its share in driving the gray-clad battalions from the field the next day. The guarding of Middle Tennessee and the taking of East Tennessee had since then been its special charge and designed function, and in token thereof it had been named anew "the Army of the Cumberland," after the river that traverses those regions. The army was composed principally of soldiers from the old Northwest Territory,—a region dedicated to human freedom in the ordinance of 1787. But while Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin furnished the bulk of the troops, there were also regiments from

Kentucky and several composed of East Tennessee Unionists. Pennsylvania had sent a contingent, and Missouri and Kansas were both represented. From the regular army of the United States, there were a formidable force of artillery, a few troops of cavalry, and a particularly fine brigade of infantry.

The Confederate Army of the Tennessee was composed largely of sons of the Commonwealth from which it derived its name, but almost every other State in the Confederacy was represented. A picturesque and romantic element was the famous "Orphan Brigade" composed of Kentuckians who fought for the South while their State adhered to the North, and who attested their heroism on many occasions during the war. The two armies were substantially equal in strength, for the Army of the Cumberland reported an available present of 43,400 men, while the Army of the Tennessee, which had the advantage of position, showed 37,700 ready for battle. The Southern Army was greatly superior in cavalry, for this arm of the service had not, as yet, received in the North the attention it warranted. On the other hand, the Northern Army was greatly superior in artillery. While the bulk of both armies was made up of veteran troops, each had considerable percentages of raw levies.

Gen. Braxton Bragg had the advantage,—somewhat doubtful in his case,—of long service

with his Army of the Tennessee. He was a splendid organizer and disciplinarian, thoroughly versed in the technique of his profession, brave, honorable, devoted to his cause, and a strategist of no mean order. But he united a high, imperious temper and a saturnine disposition with a martinet's passion for the letter of military regulation and etiquette. As a consequence, he was frequently embroiled with those near him in stations of authority,—officers who did not hesitate to accuse him of finding convenient scapegoats for his own errors. His controversies with those under him form an interesting chapter of Confederate records. It is but just to him to add that there were those that fought under him who testified to warm admiration for his soldierly abilities and who entertained high personal esteem for his qualities as a man.

Bragg's army was divided into two corps. One of these corps was commanded by Lieutenant-General William J. Hardee, who had won a conspicuous position in the Army of the United States before he had come to offer his sword and talents to the Confederacy. He was the author of a book of tactics employed in the United States Army long after the Civil War,—a system said to have been founded on the drill regulations devised by Napoleon. The other corps was commanded by Lieut.-Gen, Leonidas Polk, who was Bragg's pet aversion, and who spent

much of the next twelve months in writing to Richmond about his superior and extricating himself from the latter's orders of arrest.

General Polk had been educated at West Point, but had afterward entered the Episcopal Ministry. When the war broke out he was Bishop of Louisiana; but he speedily exchanged the surplice for the uniform, and attained high rank in the Southern Army. He was a man of considerable warlike talent, though perhaps short of first-grade.

One of Bragg's division commanders was Major-General John C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, who, as Vice-President of the United States, had declared the count of the electoral vote whereby Lincoln was chosen President, and who had left his seat in the United States Senate,—months after the outbreak of hostilities,—to cast his fortunes with the South. Afterward, as Confederate Secretary of War, he accompanied Jefferson Davis on his flight from Richmond, and assisted Gen. Joseph E. Johnston in arranging the terms for the surrender of the latter's army to William T. Sherman,—terms that were repudiated by the Washington authorities.

Other notable figures in Bragg's army were the impetuous Gen. "Pat" Cleburne, who was to lose his life in the wild charge on the fortifications of Franklin two years later; Gen. John H. Morgan, the Kentucky partisan raider, and Gen. Joseph

Wheeler, the cavalry leader, who had so managed the rear-guard in the retreat from Kentucky as to preserve intact the rich booty of the "Blue Grass" region borne by the retiring Confederates. Wheeler was one of the Southern generals who later saw service under the "old flag" in the Spanish-American war, commanding a division in Shafter's Army before Santiago.

Maj.-Gen. William S. Rosecrans was one of the contradictions of the war. A graduate of West Point, he had resigned from the army and was practising his profession of engineering, when the outbreak of hostilities called him to arms again. He had achieved considerable success in 1861, when, having taken up a work left unfinished by McClellan, he cleared the Confederates out of West Virginia, thereby placing in temporary eclipse the military reputation of Robert E. Lee. His assignment to the command of the Army of the Cumberland was chiefly due to his defense of Corinth during the fall, though he was criticised by Grant,—then his immediate superior,—for not having achieved greater results in this engagement. As a strategist Rosecrans was of the first order; indeed, one of his campaigns still stands as a model for the study of professional soldiers. But brave, warm-hearted, and impulsive, he was prone to lose his poise in battle, as the melancholy outcome of Chickamauga was later to prove.

Rosecrans had divided his army into right wing, centre and left wing,—for convenience designated as corps. The centre was commanded by Maj.-Gen. George H. Thomas, the idol of the army, and probably the most complete soldier that the Union produced. It was said of him that he never made a mistake. At Mill Springs he had given the Union cause its first generous beam of hope by his crushing defeat of Zollicoffer. In the recent campaign in Kentucky it was his soldierly instinct that had penetrated the plans of the enemy; his counsel, which followed, led to success,—which disregarded, led to failure. It was he who below Chattanooga was to gather around him the fragments of a broken army, the commander of which had fled the field, and fighting on, was to win lasting fame as the "Rock of Chickamauga." It was he who, at Nashville,—waiting amid a storm of criticism, abuse, and threats from those higher in authority,—sallied forth, when all was ready, to win the most complete victory of the four years' struggle.

The right wing of the Army of the Cumberland was under command of Maj.-Gen. Alexander McDowell McCook, a native of Ohio, and one of the "Fighting McCooks," so-called, because so many of his family fought for the Union. The left wing was commanded by Maj.-Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden, scion of a noted Kentucky family, which, with great liberality and rare impartiality,



contributed stalwart representatives to both sides of the war. Among the division commanders was Philip H. Sheridan, who later was to defeat Early in the Valley of the Shenandoah, and, by throwing his columns across the line of Lee's retreat from Richmond, was to furnish the prelude for the final scenes of the war drama at Appamatox.

Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, had, after the Battle of Shiloh, been occupied as a secondary base by the Army of the Cumberland, and had been heavily fortified. Distant 150 miles from Louisville,—the primary base,—with lines of communication frequently interrupted by the ubiquitous Morgan and other Confederate raiders, it was difficult to accumulate sufficient supplies for a campaigning army; but by December ample stores were in hand. Murfreesboro, where the headquarters of the Army of the Tennessee had been established, was an important military and strategic place as it was the converging point of a large number of unusually good wagon-roads and by reason of its location on the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. Its facilities gave it dominance over a wide stretch of country, rich in supplies and recruits for the Confederates, and its possession was the first requisite in that movement for the relief of East Tennessee and its harassed Unionists,—a movement that had been so constantly urged by President Lincoln upon the Federal commanders in that region.

The hearts of those in authority in the Confederate Government never beat so high with hope as during those December days of 1862. Mr. Davis and his Cabinet, as they surveyed the situation, might well have felt that they had reason for confidence. The principal army of the Northern foe had been repeatedly and seriously defeated, and was about to suffer the awful reverse of Fredericksburg. In Tennessee and Mississippi,—while fortune had not been so uniformly kindly,—there were all the facilities, resources, and spirit for successful aggressive work. While much ground had been lost in the Trans-Mississippi Department, word had lately come that Hindman had succeeded in raising a fresh army in Arkansas,—a force that was expected to begin the task of redeeming that State and recovering Missouri. Pemberton confronted Grant with temporarily superior forces near Vicksburg. Confederate diplomatic efforts were at length promising to bear fruit, and the *Alabama* and other vessels were driving Northern commerce from the high seas. New Orleans had fallen; but Mobile, Charleston, Wilmington, and Savannah held out, to offer refuge for the blockade runners, which brought the precious military stores into the South.

It was under the spell of sentiment, inspired by such conditions, that the Confederate President paid a visit to his generals and their forces in

Tennessee and Mississippi. Bragg felt so certain of himself and his ground that he readily fell in with the suggestion of Mr. Davis to detach some 10,000 troops to Pemberton, though Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, who was in command of the whole department, advised against this course. The presence of their President roused the enthusiasm of the soldiers at Murfreesboro to a high pitch, and many official and social ceremonies served to vary the festivities planned for the Christmas season. There were balls, receptions, theatrical entertainments, and one evening, in the presence of a brilliant throng, General Morgan took unto himself a wife,—the ceremony being performed by Bishop-General Polk,—and immediately left for Kentucky on another of the raids that did so much to harass, impede, and annoy the Union armies.

Rosecrans had learned of the detachment to Pemberton, of Morgan's departure, and also had been informed that Wheeler had been sent on a raid. He rightly concluded that the time to strike Bragg was when the Confederate cavalry was absent, and his three corps set out from Nashville on separate roads the day after Christmas. It soon developed that, if Wheeler had been ordered away, he had been recalled; for his troopers gave ample notice of the advance of the Union Army, and Bragg had plenty of opportunity to perfect a plan of resistance.

Thomas and Crittenden, however, encountered little difficulty on the march. McCook found Hardee in his path, and had to do some heavy skirmishing before he got up. But the evening of December 30 saw the Army of the Cumberland in position about three miles from Murfreesboro. In some way Rosecrans got the impression that Bragg had fallen back, and gave orders for entering the town. In the darkness some of Crittenden's troops began a movement,—a movement that must have resulted disastrously, if pushed; and shots had already been exchanged with the Confederate pickets, when the mistake was discovered and the order recalled. Though it had rained for several days, and though the night was bitter cold, the men of the left and centre were forbidden to light fires,—even for cooking,—lest they might betray their whereabouts. But fires were kindled all along the front of McCook's corps and far to the right thereof; for Rosecrans hoped to deceive Bragg as to his exact position. It may be conjectured that this hope was illusive, for Bragg had exceedingly accurate sources of information.

Each commander decided to attack on the morrow. Rosecrans planned to deliver battle from his left flank, crumpling up the right of his enemy, and taking up the attack with his centre in such a way as to enfilade and crush Bragg's entire army. McCook was instructed to resist strongly,

but not to attack, except by way of diversion.

The position taken by McCook's corps had given Rosecrans much concern, and the night before the battle, at a conference with his principal officers, he had made several suggestions about it to the Ohio warrior. In conformity with the order of battle, McCook's right was strongly refused,—that is, bent back,—but, in general it was too near where the enemy were supposed to be to suit the commanding general. McCook, however, evinced such reluctance about giving up ground for which his men had already fought,—and which presented elements of natural strength that were not to be found further back,—that the matter was at length left to his own judgment. He, therefore, placed the bulk of his corps in conformity with the rest of the army, which was aligned upon a north-and-south line, threw back the right brigades of Willich and Kirk,—of Johnson's division,—so that they, with their artillery supports, faced almost directly south, and placed, as a reserve, in the corner thus formed Baldwin's brigade of the same division. The rest of the battle front, while presenting in general an eastern face on a north-and-south line, was here advanced, here retired, as inequalities of ground or patches of forest seemed to offer favorable position. The whole Union Army was west of Stone's River, though the extreme left of Crittenden's left wing touched that stream at a ford.

Bragg's plan of battle called for a heavy concentration of force on his left flank, which was to take the initiative in an attack upon the Union right, and by a grand wheel, with the centre as a base, would take the invaders in flank and rear. Each unit was to take up the movement as the battle reached it, and it was hoped that by a rapid, spirited, and sustained attack it would be possible to force Rosecrans back of the Nashville pike,—his sole line of supply and retreat,—and hurling his commands one upon the other, accomplish the capture or destruction of the whole Union Army. In furtherance of his plan, Bragg placed almost two-fifths of his infantry at his left under Hardee, to whom was entrusted the initiation of the movement. But one division was left, under Breckenridge on the right, and separated from the rest of the army by the river.

The Confederate battle front,—could it have been viewed in its entirety,—would have presented a much more symmetrical appearance than that of its adversary; as the comparatively open and level country that it momentarily occupied permitted a more orderly alignment. McCown's division occupied the extreme left,—except for some cavalry,—and Cleburne's heavy columns were massed almost immediately in the rear.

Thus, it will be observed, the rival commanders had, with practically similar conditions to encounter, hit upon practically similar plans of bat-

tle. Could each plan have been carried out, the two armies would have presented the appearance of revolving upon a common axis, the right in each case retiring before the attack of the enemy's left. As it was, however, a great advantage,—as must be apparent,—was to attend that army which should first strike the enemy with its heavy masses in battle array. And the contingencies of the conflict ordained that that advantage should be gained by the Confederates.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST DAY'S BATTLE

Crittendon's corps on the left of the Army of the Cumberland,—which had been selected by Rosecrans to make the initial move in the fight,—was separated from Breckenridge's entrenched division, on Bragg's right, by two miles of distance and Stone's River, which in that immediate vicinity could be crossed at only one ford. Between the heavily-massed regiments on Bragg's left flank and McCook's corps, to the contrary, there were only a few hundred yards. Therefore, though McCown,—who had moved in the night,—found some difficulty in adjusting his line to suit Hardee's taste, the Confederates had ample time to strike the first blow. A dense fog shielded the movement from the Union pickets. McCown's troops swung off in a semi-oblique direction, leaving an ever-widening interval between him and Withers's division, of Polk's corps, into which at the proper instant Cleburne slipped. In a few moments the crackling of rifle-fire heralded the opening of the battle.



That the brigades on the extreme right of the Union Army were surprised upon that fateful morning has been repeatedly denied; but it is certain that they were not properly prepared for the storm that was about to burst upon them. August Willich was actually away from his command, and his men were at breakfast, with their arms stacked. The captain of the battery that was posted at the left of the brigade had sent his horses off to water, so little did he dream of impending danger. The men of the other brigade were scarcely,—if any,—better prepared, and upon them fell the brunt of the first assault.

Right on the heels of the pickets, whose shots were of little apparent effect, appeared a long line of gray-clad infantry that extended far beyond either flank of the hapless Union brigades. The advancing troops fired as they came, and many Northern soldiers were shot down before they could grasp their arms. General Kirk sent a vain summons to Willich for aid, and fell mortally hurt in an heroic effort to form his men. Old Willich himself, spurring in hot haste to rejoin his command, rode straight into the enemy's line. This scion of a royal house,—for he was reputed to be the natural son of William of Prussia,—had several months in a Southern prison in which to reflect upon whatever error he may have committed that morning. The two brigades did not flee without an effort at resistance;

indeed, both offered obstinate opposition for as long a time as possible, but they could not hold out against two divisions, of four brigades each.

Kirk lost 500 killed and wounded, and 350 captured; while Willich's loss was more than 400 killed and wounded, and about 700 captured. They were soon in headlong flight.

With the dispersion of these troops, but one brigade, of Johnson's division,—the reserve under Baldwin,—was left intact; and now the next division was threatened on the flank. With quick soldierly instinct the commander, Jefferson C. Davis, drew back his right brigade, under Post, and made other dispositions to coöperate with Baldwin. He had scarcely had time to complete these preparations, ere both Baldwin and Post were struck. At the same moment the Confederate grand wheel having got into full swing, two brigades of Withers's division, of Polk's corps, hurled themselves against Davis's two remaining brigades,—Carlin's and Woodruff's,—and against Sill's brigade of Sheridan's division, adjoining Davis on the left.

Here the Confederates met a check. Baldwin, it is true, had to retreat shortly, to escape being taken in right and rear; but Post repulsed an attack upon his front, and Carlin, Woodruff, and Sill threw back their assailants so violently that Polk ordered up his reserves. A second attack met the same fate, though General Sill was killed

between the guns of a battery that he was directing. For the third time the gray infantry advanced to the fight, which now involved the whole of Sheridan's division. In frontal attack they were held, but one Union command after another had to retire, to avoid capture under flank attacks. Thus Sheridan's division was dislodged, as had been Johnson's and Davis's.

Up to this juncture the working out of Bragg's plan had fully equalled, if not exceeded, the expectations of the Southern commander. The whole right wing of the Union army had been hurled from position, and some of the commands composing it had been driven for miles. Thousands of Union prisoners and great stores of small arms had been captured, together with many pieces of artillery, which could not be hauled back in the headlong retreat over the rough ground and through the clumps of cedar in which the battlefield abounded. In its further development, or swing, the grand wheel was now threatening the Union centre, and the exultant Confederates entered with confidence upon another distinct stage of the fighting. If the right could be driven still further, or the centre pierced, the Nashville pike would fall into the possession of the Army of the Tennessee, which would then have at its mercy practically the whole Army of the Cumberland. But,—though the prize seemed so near,—it now became evident that new conditions

were to be encountered, and that the contest was about to enter upon a new phase.

Confident in the belief that his right wing could and would resist any movement against it, Rosecrans had gone early in the morning to Crittenden's corps, to witness the initiation of his carefully conceived plan. It was 8 o'clock before the leading brigade of Van Cleve's division waded Stone's River at the near-by ford, and began climbing the hill on the other side, with a view to attacking Breckinridge. For a couple of hours firing had been heard on the right, but it gave no uneasiness to the Union commander, who believed that the instructions of the night before were being obeyed. Even when a message from McCook, asking aid in somewhat formal terms, came, Rosecrans was not disturbed, but sent back word that the right must be held.

It was not until two of Van Cleve's brigades had crossed the stream, and the third was making ready, that a frantic message gave Rosecrans an idea of the disaster that had befallen part of his army. And as he gave hurried orders, the crowds of fugitives,—cowards, skulkers, the slightly wounded, and brave men who had fought until beaten,—that began to stream through the woods brought confirmation of the evil tidings.

Rosecrans instantly recalled Van Cleve's division. One brigade,—Fyffe's,—that had not yet crossed, he hurried straight out on the Nashville

pike, where his instinct told him the greatest danger lay, and where at that moment the enemy's cavalry was reaping rich spoil from the long wagon trains. The men of Beatty's brigade were sent, dripping with the water of Stone's River, right into the heart of the battle, which now raged almost in the rear of the centre. The third brigade,—Price's,—was held to guard the ford. The demonstration of this division against Breckenridge, though so quickly abandoned, had important effects on that general as well as on the fortunes of the day.

It was the supreme test for Rosecrans, and whatever his previous faults may have been, he now bore himself well. He hurried up ammunition, which was much needed at many points; directed the formation of new lines and the posting of fresh batteries; and whenever the emergency permitted, he took himself to the battle front, where his presence served to reanimate his sorely-beset soldiers. In spurring from one part of the field to another, his aide-de-camp and much-loved companion, Lieut.-Col. Julius P. Garesche, was beheaded by a cannon ball, and his blood sprinkled the uniform of his commander. But battles give scant time for mourning, and Rosecrans, without delay, ordered the further disintegration of Crittenden's corps, that reënforcements might be sent where needed. Harker, of Wood's division, was hurried after Beatty,—to the right of Rosecrans's

division of Thomas's corps,—while Hascall's brigade was held as a mobile body, under the eye of General Wood himself.

Upon Thomas now fell a burden of tremendous weight. He had early perceived the displacement of Sheridan, and had sent two brigades of Roseau's division to reënforce that commander and support his right. Then he turned to face one of the most dangerous and furious efforts made by the foe during the whole day. Hardee, with his whole force, was moving to take Sheridan in flank and in the rear; Cheatham, of Polk's corps, was advancing against Sheridan in front, and Withers was preparing to leap upon Negley. To give way here would be fatal, for back of Thomas and of what was left of the right wing Rosecrans was hastily arranging a new battle-line to hold the Nashville Pike.

The commander of the centre seemed ubiquitous. Though his charger never broke out of the slow pace that had given its master the nickname of "Old Trot," Thomas was apparently in all places at once,—now directing the firing to repulse a charge, now placing a regiment in line, and again marking a point to which his troops must retire and take up the fight anew.

The Confederate infantry now pressed forward in a frenzy of enthusiasm. The piercing "rebel yell" rose triumphantly above the roar of cannon and the bark of musketry, and many regi-

ments pressed clear to the borders of the cedars in which the Union troops were posted, before they had to retire from a merciless fire.

Again and again Hardee and Cheatham brought their men to the charge. The exigencies of the battle twisted the Union line into strange shapes. Here a brigade was in a half-circle with a concave side to the enemy; another presented a convex front to attack. Miller's brigade of Negley's division was like a triangle without the base, and, aided by splendid artillery service, repulsed simultaneously assaults in front and on both sides. But many trains having been captured or swept away, Sheridan's men found themselves out of ammunition, and his division was withdrawn, leaving Negley's right and Rosseau's left "in the air." Into the interval poured the Confederate columns. Thomas was compelled to withdraw his two divisions to an improvised line, and Negley and Rosseau reluctantly faced the rear.

The firing had been so heavy in these divisions that the cartridge-boxes of dead and wounded had been robbed for the precious ammunition. Rosseau made the movement under fire, but, reaching Thomas's temporary line, turned and delivered such a blast from rifles and artillery as threw back the pursuing enemy and left the field covered with bodies.

Shepherd's brigade of regulars especially distinguished itself here; for, firing by platoon from

flank to flank,—as steadily as though at drill,—it cut down the enemy in front as a scythe mows grain, and drove away a greatly superior force, losing in a few minutes one-third of its whole number. Negley's division was almost surrounded, and had to cut its way,—sometimes at the point of the bayonet,—through the Confederates, who had reached its rear. In the movement this division had to abandon six guns.

Palmer's division, which was already fiercely engaged, was now in the greatest peril, as Negley's retirement left an unprotected flank. On the right Cruft's brigade was almost surrounded while repulsing a frontal attack; but Grose's brigade, held in reserve, changed front to the rear and cleared a way. Hazen, at the apex of what was known as the "Round Forest," met repeated heavy attacks, but, owing to superior position and artillery support, was able to hold his own, though losing heavily. As Palmer retired, his division established connection with the right and faced the enemy with renewed confidence.

The grand wheel had now traversed the full quarter of a circle. It had been carried out with remarkable consistency and with remarkable speed and power. Every command in Bragg's army, with the exception of his reserve, had felt the impulse of the great maneuver, had taken a place therein, in regular order, and, at first glance, it would have seemed with complete success. For



the entire Union army, with the exception of a small part of the left wing, had been forced from position. Its battle-front, instead of facing squarely east, now faced south, and its curving line was in place behind the Nashville Pike,—its only avenue of safety,—which in some instances was in plain sight of the enemy and within reach of his artillery and musketry. But though Rosecrans had lost heavily in men, guns, horses, and ammunition, Bragg had not escaped without cost. Some of his splendid brigades mustered but half of the strength with which they had begun the battle, and almost all the men were so exhausted as to be unable to go further. Moreover, they faced an army of men,—men who disliked being beaten, who occupied an elevated position of great strength, who had secured fresh stores of ammunition, who, acutely conscious of their danger, were resolved not to yield further, and who actually, here and there, showed a disposition to make reprisals upon their valiant foe.

But Bragg had not entirely exhausted his resources. The Union left lay temptingly near him, and, if he could crush or turn it, the rest of Rosecrans's army might still be his. Fresh troops were needed for such an attempt, but the five brigades of Breckinridge's division were at hand and they were summoned for the final effort. Breckenridge had been asked for reënforcements early in the day, but he had seen Van Cleve's big division start

in his direction, and, apparently, had not seen it return when it was sent flying to arrest the rout of McCook's corps. He had also been ordered to meet some reënforcements, which Bragg had thought were coming to Rosecrans, but which did not appear; and consequently, had kept his division intact. Now he detached the brigades of Adams and Jackson, which, dashing through the river, threw themselves impetuously upon the Union forces in the "Round Forest." Upon Hazen's sorely-tried troops the brunt of the assault fell, but, using the railroad embankment as a protection, they managed to hold on. Soon Adams and Jackson turned back, shattered beyond further use.

Now Breckinridge in person led to the assault the brigades of Preston and Palmer; but Hazen was now aided by whatever regiments, battalions, and odds and ends of troops could be spared to him. Preston and Palmer were not only driven back, but they left some prisoners as a result of a countercharge by a Union regiment.

Here ended the first day's battle.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NIGHT AND THE NEXT DAY

The dusk of the short winter's day had already come on when the last desperate charges of the Confederate hosts were repelled. As though by common consent, the firing ceased almost simultaneously on both sides, and a period of comparative calm succeeded the storm of battle.

Never was a cessation of strife more welcome than to the two armies. The Army of the Cumberland had been so riven and torn during the struggle as to bear scarcely any resemblance to the compact organization of the morning. Divisions had been swept away from the rest of their corps, brigades had been torn away from divisions, regiments from brigades, and even battalions and companies from regiments. It was in very truth an improvised battle-line,—the line that had clung to the Nashville Pike during the closing hours of the engagement. A vast number of individual soldiers,—not by any means all skulkers, but, in many cases, men who had become separated from their own commands and had done valiant service wherever opportunity offered, with or without

orders,—were wandering about back of the Union lines, seeking the camp-fires of their comrades. To restore a semblance of order and alignment was the first task of officers,—great and small,—and it was hours before this could be accomplished in part. It was the intention of Rosecrans to forbid fires, for fear of drawing attacks from the enemy; but before any order could be issued, they were lighted all along the line, and the exhausted troops got an opportunity to boil coffee and toast bacon before sinking down to sleep.

On the Confederate side there was less confusion. The Army of the Tennessee,—though clearly fought out for the time being,—had preserved far more of the autonomy of its several commands, and as the camp-fires were kindled along its battle front, the impression was universal that the fight would be renewed on the morrow. Bragg himself was in a state of exultation, for though his cherished plan had not yet been carried out, he felt that success had merely been deferred.

There was a council of the principal Federal officers during the night at the commanding general's headquarters. Rosecrans, it is said, had in mind a retirement of a few miles to Overall's Creek, but this was given up when it was pointed out that the new position was scarcely as strong as the one now held, and offered few advantages. Then somebody suggested the question of retreat. There is a tradition to the effect that Thomas had

fallen into a doze during the talking, but that he woke up when this unpleasant word was uttered.

"Retreat!" he exclaimed,—so the story goes,—  
"This army can't retreat!"

This assurance seemed to satisfy the timid ones, and the question was dropped forthwith.

New Year's Day, 1863, dawned clear and cold. During the night every effort had been made to strengthen the Union position, and to good effect; for Bragg had a cloud of skirmishers out with the dawn, and all day they searched the line in every part, at times being aided by the artillery. But not a crevice could be found, and the Confederate maneuvers at no time developed into movements of importance. But Wheeler's Cavalry found plenty to do, and its capture of a wagon-train caused the liveliest rumors of disaster among the garrison that had been left at Nashville.

Despite, however, the activity of the horsemen of the enemy, Rosecrans managed to get through the lines a considerable store of rations, ammunition, and other supplies. So the day ended with the situation much as it had been when the day began, except that the soldiers on both sides had had an opportunity to restore themselves after the intense fatigue of the first day's fight, and that order had been evolved out of the chaos into which the Army of the Cumberland had been thrown.

One change in the situation,—at the time re-

garded as of little account, but which was to have momentous results,—had been made. During the day Rosecrans gave some scrutiny to Breckenridge's division of the Army of the Tennessee, which had retired to its original position on Bragg's right. As this force was posted, it was too far away to be watched closely, and Rosecrans, as a precautionary measure, directed Crittenden to throw Van Cleve's division, now under Gen. Samuel Beatty (for its own white-haired commander had been wounded), together with Grosse's brigade, across the ford to a position in Breckenridge's front. The movement, which had for its purpose little more than observation, was accomplished without interference on the afternoon of January 1, 1863.

## CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND OF JANUARY, 1863

For the greater part of the next day the two armies merely rested on their arms. With food and rest, the feeling of confidence, which had been somewhat shaken in the Union Army, began to revive, and the soldiers exhibited a cheerful tone. The Confederate forces, however, showed a contrary spirit. There was deep chagrin in all ranks, because the work that had been so bravely begun was not resumed and carried to a triumphant end; while criticisms of the general commanding began to be exchanged with freedom among the officers highest in rank. There is no doubt that this gossip reached Bragg's ears and that he was stung to the quick by it. It is possible, too, that it led him to order the movement that resulted in the final scene of the battle.

During his repeated examinations of the field, Bragg had noticed the Union detachment that had been thrown across the river in Breckinridge's front, and he now determined to dislodge it. In his official reports he lets it be understood that he merely wanted to drive away a force that was

posted in an advantageous position for observation and that might, if re-enforced, be able to make a dangerous attack upon his army,—for it could enfilade his whole line. But, if dislodgement were all that was intended, it is hard to understand why Bragg should have organized such a heavy column for a slight task. It may well be suspected that the Confederate Commander saw an opportunity to crush the Union left and, in the confusion necessarily ensuing, to drive the whole Federal Army from the field in rout.

Bragg gave to Breckinridge 10,000 of his best fighting men, including 2,000 cavalry and ample supports of artillery. At the head of this formidable column, Breckenridge descended upon the Union troops in his immediate front, at 4 p. m., January 2. The blow fell with the swiftness and force of a hurricane. Both Van Cleve's division and Grosse's brigade had lost heavily in the previous fighting, and their ranks were too thin to offer effectual resistance. A few volleys of musketry and a few rounds of artillery were fired, and then they broke and fled to the ford, closely pursued by the yelling Confederate host.

By a singular chance, not a single Union general officer was near this part of the field at the time. They were, in fact, around the centre and right, against which Bragg, as a ruse, had opened a heavy artillery fire. The brigade nearest the ford was under the command of John F. Miller, a



young Indiana colonel, who had not yet received his stars. It was apparent to him that Breckenridge's charge, unless checked, would result disastrously to the army; and he broached the subject of a countercharge to an officer of like grade of another brigade. He was assured of support. Miller sent an orderly to find some general officer to authorize the movement, and drew up his men in readiness. He had barely 1,500 with which he might hope to check 10,000, flushed with victory. In a few moments the crisis was at hand, and Miller was still awaiting orders. His brigade opened ranks to let through the fugitives, and then Miller, placing himself at the head of his men, spurred his horse into the water. He was in mid-stream, when the orderly returned with the news that General Palmer, the only general officer to be found, had forbidden the movement.

"It is too late now," replied Miller, and drawing his sword, he gave the order to charge.

The very audacity of this step was its success. It is probable that the Confederates believed Miller to be leading an overwhelming force, for they stopped, fired a few shots, and then began to retreat. With fixed bayonets, Miller's men pursued, and now, with quick perception of the opportunity, other Union commands joined in the charge. Perhaps a half mile had been traversed when the Confederates showed signs of rallying. But as their lines were halted and rearranged,

the missiles of death from half a hundred cannon,—drawn hastily together by Major Mendenhall, Crittenden's chief of artillery, and posted on a hill which commanded the whole field,—suddenly fell among them. They fled again, leaving on the ground 2,000 dead and wounded,—the fruit of an action of less than an hour.

This ended the battle of Stone's River. For another twenty-four hours the two armies confronted each other with no fight of importance. During the night of January 3, Bragg retreated unmolested. He reported having received information that Rosecrans was being reënforced, but in this again he may be suspected of a euphemism. As a matter of fact, the retreat had been advised at a council of his principal generals, two of whom,—Withers and Cheatham,—united in the blunt statement over their own signatures that he had only three reliable divisions left and that these were, to a certain extent, demoralized. Most of his officers also assured him, with equal frankness, that he ought to give up the command of the army,—advice that he did not heed; and Polk, for writing to this effect to the Confederate President, was placed under arrest; but he was afterward released.

## CHAPTER VII

### WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN,—AND WHAT WAS

The Battle of Stone's River produced profound disappointment both in the North and in the South. Claimed as a victory by both sides, the first fruits fell to the Army of the Cumberland, which had not only held the field but had compelled the retirement of its adversary and the relinquishment by the latter of strategic positions and domination over considerable areas. But as the weeks passed without developments of other striking results, the Northern people felt that the victory had been little more than technical, and that the battle was another of the practically indecisive contests so frequent at that period.

On the other hand, the Southern people were mortified and chagrined at a defeat suffered when their cause was prospering in almost all other quarters. They were not more given to analyzing strategic and tactical features than their Northern enemies, but they were able to realize that their second army in size and importance had lost thousands of soldiers, and that it has been driven out of Middle Tennessee, and away from the vicinity of the State capital, the recovery of which

had always been a cherished object of their hearts. The opposition to Bragg, both in and out of the Army of the Tennessee, became intensified from the time the retirement from Murfreesboro was ordered.

It was perhaps natural that the outcome was thus viewed in the two sections, for it is in the light of what it might have been,—rather than what it was,—that Stone's River must be judged. Union victory upon that field did not, it is true, reveal results of transcendent importance, but Confederate victory,—at one time so near,—would have been followed by the weightiest and most far-reaching consequences. Had Bragg been able to drive his infantry across the Nashville pike on the last day of 1862, or had he been able to crush the Union left on the second of January, 1863, the capture or destruction,—whole or partial,—of his enemy would have been one of the least of these consequences. (For the way to the Ohio would then have been open, and Cincinnati and other opulent Northern cities would have been at the mercy of Confederate arms. Vicksburg would not have been an historic name, for overwhelming forces could have been turned against Grant to crush him, or drive him from Mississippi. Tennessee,—second State in population below Mason and Dixon's line, and first in such food as armies consume,—would have been held to furnish the vital recruits and supplies to the

Confederacy. East Tennessee would have waited in vain for the relieving Northern forces. Kentucky and Missouri might have been wrested from Union control, and Arkansas freed from the presence of the invader. Finally, Europe's recognition, with the manifold complexities for the North that must have ensued therefrom, could have been no longer logically denied to the Richmond government.)

After Stone's River, Bragg's battered battalions retired 30 to 40 miles away,—to the line of Duck River,—and there maintained an attitude of defiance for 6 months. It took that period for Rosecrans to restore the ravages of battle in his army. Wheeler, Morgan, and Forrest,—the cavalry chieftans,—meanwhile, kept up a series of raids upon Rosecrans's long line of communications,—raids that sorely tried that commander, pestered as he was by constant injunctions from Washington to move forward. But in June, 1863, having at length accumulated sufficient supplies, the Army of the Cumberland started the campaign that was to drive the Army of the Tennessee out of the State from which it took its name. Then came another halt; but in September the Union forces again advanced and the Confederates again retired.

At Chickamauga the Army of the Tennessee, reinforced by Longstreet and Buckner, turned, and, inflicting a bloody defeat upon the Army of

the Cumberland, locked it up in the fastness of Chattanooga. But Bragg was unable to gather substantial fruits from his victory. At Missionary Ridge, in December, the Army of the Cumberland led in the movement that broke the battle-front of its historic adversary. Thenceforth the Army of the Tennessee,—fighting bravely at every turn,—was obliged by the weight of opposing numbers to retire further and further into the South. At Resaca, at Dalton, at Kenesaw Mountain, at Atlanta, and at a score of other places it showed the qualities of valor and endurance that had already won it deserved renown. But it never looked to the North again until the latter days of 1864, when Hood summoned it for its last great adventure,—that desperate leap past Sherman, which was to end in utter rout before the ramparts of Nashville.

The Army of the Cumberland lost in the Stone's River campaign 1,730 killed, 7,802 wounded, 3,717 captured and missing; a total of 13,249.

The Army of the Tennessee lost 1,294 killed, 7,945 wounded, 1,027 captured or missing; a total of 10,266.

## APPENDIX





## APPENDIX

### NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

"In the second half of this year (1862) the Confederates failed to gain control of Maryland and Kentucky, but made head strongly and at the end of it were at the height of their power, with the North badly defeated at all points save one. The writer considers that the battle of Stone's River, or Murfreesboro, on December 31st, was the military turning-point of the war, though the Confederates made various strokes at different times for political purposes, which, had they succeeded, might have attained their end, the chief of which was the campaign of Gettysburg. From a purely military point of view, however, nothing could save the Confederacy unless the results of Stone's River were undone. The year 1863 opened with the Confederates fought out; they had made their effort but could not maintain it, and had failed to secure the centre of the strategical line which was vital for both sides."—"The American Civil War," Formby; London, John Murray, 1910.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER II.

" . . . That my opinion was founded upon a false estimate of the facts was the very least part of my fault. I did not perceive the gross impropriety of such an utterance from a cabinet minister, of a power united in blood and language, and bound to loyal neutrality; the case being further exag-

gerated by the fact that we were already, so to speak, under indictment before the world, for not—as was alleged—having strictly enforced the laws of neutrality in the matter of the cruisers. My offence was indeed only a mistake, but one of incredible grossness, and with such consequences of offence and alarm attached to it, that my failing to perceive them justly exposed me to very severe blame. . . .”—Gladstonian fragment, “Life of Gladstone,” Morley; New York. The Macmillan Company, 1911.

#### NOTE TO CHAPTER III.

“Further to mislead the enemy as to the point from which the attack was to be made, long lines of camp-fires were started on McCook’s right and commands given by staff-officers to imaginary regiments in tones loud enough to be heard by the enemy’s skirmishers, to induce the Confederates to think that our line extended much further to the right than it actually did. I have always doubted whether Bragg was misled or deceived by this subterfuge; and not unlikely he considered it a confession of weakness on our right and formed his own plans accordingly.”—“The Murfreesboro Campaign,” Otis; Boston. Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, Vol. VII, 1908.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER VI.

“At this juncture, Colonel John F. Miller, followed by a portion of Stanley’s brigade, charged with his

brigade across the river. Disregarding an order from a general officer, not his immediate commander, to desist from so hazardous an adventure, he dashed over and fell furiously upon the foe, already in rapid retreat. The right of Miller's line was supported by the Eighteenth Ohio, and portions of the Thirty-seventh Indiana and Seventy-eighth Pennsylvania, of Stanley's Brigade. Moving on the opposite bank, his left, was Grose's brigade, which had changed front and resisted the enemy, when Price and Grider gave ground, and in his rear were Hazen's brigade and portions of Beatly's division. Miller reached a battery in position and, charging with the Seventy-eighth Pennsylvania, Sixty-ninth and Seventy-fourth Ohio, and Nineteenth Illinois, the Twenty-first Ohio, striking opportunely on the left, captured four guns and the colors of the Twenty-sixth Tennessee Regiment. . . ."

—"History of the Army of the Cumberland," Van Horne; Cincinnati, Robert Clarke & Co., 1875.

"Miller sent his staff officers and orderlies, Lieutenant (afterward Brigadier-General) Henry Chinney, Lieutenant Ayers, and Major A. B. Bonnaffin (I repeat that I am writing now what I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears) to scour the field and ask permission to cross the stream to Van Cleve's relief. Only one such officer could be found, General John M. Palmer (of Illinois) and from him came instead of the desired permission a positive prohibition—an order not to cross. The other two brigade commanders, belonging to the division, General Spear of Tennessee and Colonel T. R. Stanley, of the Eighteenth Ohio, were not present. General

Negley, the division commander, was not to be found. . . .

"Miller found himself the ranking officer present with the division and realized that the decision fraught with so much importance lay with him. He was surrounded by a group of regimental commanders who alternately studied the field and his face. . . . He turned to the officers around him saying quietly:

" 'I will charge them.'

" 'And I'll follow you,' exclaimed the gallant Scott, wheeling and plunging his spurs into his steed to hasten back to his regiment (the Nineteenth Illinois). Colonel Stoughton of the Eleventh Michigan and other regimental commanders belonging to the Twenty-ninth brigade echoed Scott's enthusiastic adherence and they, too, started for their troops."—"God's War," Vance. London, New York. F. Tennyson Neely, 1899.



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